



To: The Appropriations Committee
From: Erin Wirpsa Eisenberg, Executive Director, CitySeed
Re: Community Investment Act
Date: March 10, 2010

In these challenging economic times, leaders and communities at every level will be required to make difficult budgetary decisions. The one silver lining is that this situation offers the opportunity to take a hard look at programs and trim back those that are not meeting their objectives, while protecting those that are effective. I am writing today to strongly urge the Appropriations Committee to recognize the outstanding accomplishments and contributions to Connecticut of the Community Investment Act and to prevent this act's \$12 million funding stream from being re-directed for general purposes.

Redirecting funding from this program will:

1. **Deal a fatal blow to the ability of the farmland preservation program to act quickly and effectively.** With fewer staff and limited funds for surveys and appraisals (non-capital expenditures), the program will fall back to its historically slow pace of processing farm applications.
2. **Deal a fatal blow to CT dairy farmers and the viability of over 70,000 acres of farmland.** Over the next two years, CIA funds will be a vital source of dairy support funding that will keep over 70,000 acres of farmland in active agricultural use.
3. **Deal a fatal blow to the ability of communities and farms to craft creative solutions to meet their own challenges and needs in promoting farmland preservation and farm viability.** This program positively and quantifiably impacts a wide range of communities, both urban and rural, across the state. It is incredibly effective and has well developed mechanisms in place to promote the viability of farms and farmland through several vital grants programs. Funds have enabled towns, farms and communities across the state to purposefully meet their own self-identified needs, resulting in quantifiable measures that demonstrate the impact of the program. For example, with funding from the Agriculture Viability Grant Program (CIA provides \$1 million of funding annually to this program), CitySeed was able to create bilingual display boards for every WIC and Food Stamp office in the state, thereby informing over 250,000 people who receive food assistance benefits that they can use those benefits to purchase fresh, healthy food from local farms.

CitySeed is a nonprofit organization that operates a network of farmers' markets in the City of New Haven and seeks to promote increased access to local, healthy food and farm viability. During the 2009 market season, our markets redeemed over \$85,000 in WIC and Food Stamps from New Haven residents who are most nutritionally at-risk. In addition, these four, outdoor markets contributed over \$1.75 million to the local economy. We know firsthand the positive impact local agriculture and farms can have on a community in terms of creating jobs, building community and ensuring that inner-city residents have access to fresh, healthy food. Community Investment Act funding has been a driver of these forces for good. For the health of our urban and rural communities alike, I strongly urge you to preserve the Community Investment Act funding so that it can continue to positively and quantifiably impact communities across the state to the benefit of all.

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